

**THE JOY OF GOD'S RESTORATION**  
**Advent Series on "JOY!"**  
**December 4, 2016 Communion Sunday –2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent**  
**The Church of the Covenant**

Pastor Kay and I are preaching on JOY! This Advent and Christmas. So what is JOY!? I am subject to kidney stones and they are most painful. Whenever I have one and go to the hospital the female nurses, almost with some glee, remind me that it is the pain most similar to childbirth. And then I swear they smile just a little bit. So it is Holy Week in another church I have served and a kidney stone hits me on Good Friday and I know if I go to the hospital I will miss Easter so decide to tough it out. So I'm standing in the pulpit on Easter Sunday preaching on (of all subjects!) the "Joy of Easter" and I am in excruciating pain. But I tough it out and make it through and then drive myself to the hospital right after church. Where the nurses remind me it the pain closest to childbirth and smile just a bit. So I get a letter from a woman in that congregation later that week and she writes me, and I quote: "If you are preaching on the Joy of Easter at least you could smile!". I still do smile when I think of the word that popped into my head when I read her note. So can you have joy in the midst of pain? Can you preach on joy when you have a kidney stone? Are we capable of possessing joy regardless of circumstance? So what is JOY!????

Is joy a feeling? No, it is not. Feelings are mercurial; they go up and down; we feel one way one moment and another way the next. Joy is a constant state of being unaffected by our feelings. Is joy an experience? No, it is not. We may endeavor to conjure joy this Christmas season with all manner of experiences. Let us mull cider; let us make our traditional wassail; let us get out the Christmas decorations and decorate the Christmas tree to Nat King Cole singing "Joy to the World". We may try to manufacture joy by our experiences. But joy is not an experience. Is joy the same as happiness? No, it is not. We may be happy when we get a new job, or happy when something goes our way, or happy when we meet a new person. But its not the same as joy. Joy is deeper and far, far more profound than mere happiness. We may have joy when we have lost our job; we may have joy when nothing goes our way; we may have joy when we despair of ever meeting a new person. Indeed, we may possess joy when every circumstance in our life makes us "un-happy". The world promises happiness; Jesus delivers on joy. There is a difference. Is joy the result of material possessions? If we would believe all the television advertisements joy can be had by having a Happy Honda Days. Trust me a new car will never grant joy. Or if it does it will be temporary and fleeting, not constant and a permanent condition of the human heart. See, joy never comes from outward circumstances. It doesn't come from things, or feelings, or experiences, or other people. Joy doesn't come from outside ourselves. Joy comes from the inside. Joy is lodged in the human heart. Joy comes as a gift. Joy comes as a gift from God. Joy comes as a gift from God through Jesus Christ. Joy comes as a gift from God through Jesus Christ, born into our world and born into the human heart at Christmas. "Joy to the world, the Lord has come!"

Joy is a propositional reality lodged in the head and heart and soul and spirit; it is a spiritual reality. It is not born of outward circumstance; it is born of God. In Luke the first chapter, Zechariah and Elizabeth can have no children and they have prayed and an angel appears to Zechariah and promises the birth of a son who is John the Baptist, the herald of the coming Messiah, the one who points the way to Jesus. It is a gift from God. And as it notes in Luke 1: 14, there is a promise for all who place their faith and trust in the Lord –it promises us: "*You will have joy and gladness and many will rejoice at his birth.*" (Luke 1: 14) Jesus promises us in the gospel of John: "*You will have sorrow now, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.*" (John 16: 12) A promise of joy and gladness. A promise that nothing in this world and no one in this world can ever take away. You may have sorrow now, but no one and nothing can ever hope to take your joy from you, promises Jesus. The

Lord Jesus when faced with His own cross noted that *“For the joy that was set before Him, He willingly went to the cross.”* Jesus was promising that in HIM, in His life and in His death and in His resurrection, in that life-giving, life-sustaining relationship to be had with HIM and HIM alone, that in every cross in this life, HE promises us joy. Joy in the midst of pain. Joy in the midst of sorrow. Joy in the midst of unhappiness. Joy in the midst of loss. Joy in the midst of disappointment. Joy in the midst of disease. Whatever you and I face in this life we have a promise of JOY! Right in the midst of it through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. It doesn't come from the world. It comes from God. It is an inward spiritual reality. It only comes from Jesus.

The Psalmist writes this request of the Lord God Almighty: *“Restore to me the joy of thy salvation” (Psalm 51: 12)* It is the prayer the faithful always pray before the throne of God's mercy, love and grace. Lord, restore unto me my joy. Allow not the world or anything within it, to take that joy away. Whatever I may face this Christmas, remind me of the new birth of a new joy being born into the world just for me this Christmas. Restore my joy, my Father. It is a gift which only You can give. It comes only from Your only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. I come to You, my Father. I come to Bethlehem on bended knee this year. I come with all my hurt and pain, all my loss and grief, all my disappointments and discouragements; I come with everything that seeks to rob me of my joy. And Father I lay it down at Bethlehem, at this communion table today, at the foot of the cross of Jesus, by the manger's side. Lord, may I hear the song of angels once again *“Joy to the World, the Lord is Come!”* And may my heart sing. And may my mind believe. And may my faith speak –MY JOY, MY JOY, MY JOY –Lord, you have restored my Joy through the birth of Your Son, Jesus Christ!!!! Amen and Amen.

*By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, Pennsylvania  
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!*